DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 004 CG 014 231

AUTHOR Fisher, Pamila J.
TITLE Career and Family Decisions: The Problem and Some Solutions.
PUB DATE Feb 79
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the California Personnel and Guidance Association (Anaheim, CA, February 16-18, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; Child Rearing; *Family Planning; Family Structure; *Individual Characteristics; *Life Style; Long Range Planning; Sex Differences; *Sex Role; *Social Attitudes; Young Adults

ABSTRACT

Expected family lifestyles of young adult men and women were investigated by examining relationships among sex role preferences, expectations for female labor force participation, intended family age, and attitudes toward the provision of child care. Subjects, 715 randomly selected college freshmen, completed a data sheet which combined questions regarding demographic and personal characteristics with a sex role scale. Results indicated that: (1) women may have responded to the "motherhood mandate" because, as a total group, they intended more children than did men; (2) women earned the least traditional sex role scores, were more likely to expect to work and were less likely to prefer a non-working mother to care for their children; and (3) men earned sex role scores which favored more traditional, less equalitarian behavior. (Author/HLM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED184004

CAREER AND FAMILY DECISIONS: THE PROBLEM AND SOME SOLUTIONS*

Pamila J. Fisher, Ed.D. **

*A paper presented at the Annual Conference of the California Personnel and Guidance Association, February, 1979.

** Modesto Junior College and California State College, Stanislaus.

CG 014231

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Pamila J. Fisher
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CAREER AND FAMILY DECISIONS:
THE PROBLEM AND SOME SOLUTIONS

Young adults were found to be in the process of making complex decisions regarding careers and sex roles which also were related to their plans for future families. In addition, this study of 715 randomly selected male and female college freshmen revealed a description of their most frequently intended family lifestyles. Recommendations to the family-life educator or counselor were stressed because of the apparently conflicting expectations of some young people.

The "if, when and why" of parenthood has been, and is, of interest to family-life educators, sociologists and psychologists. However, the "why" of parenting also warrants attention in that fertility behavior appears to be intimately related to the expectations adults have with regard to what parenthood will be like. Complex decisions involving career choices, commitment to work, mate selection, sex roles, family size and the care of children combine to create a "family lifestyle" which suggests that none of these components can be usefully considered in isolation. Young adults, in particular, are in the process of making decisions based on an "expected family lifestyle" which may, for the most part, be unexamined or even unrealistic. Therefore, to be effective, family-life educators and counselors need to be

cognizant of the preferences, commitments and concerns of these young people.

What the Past Suggested

Early investigations of fertility behavior did not examine these issues but, instead, focused primarily on the differences between various ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups (Bumpass & Westoff, 1970; Fawcett, 1970, 1973; Rainwater, 1965; Ryder & Westoff, 1971). Some attempts to explain motives for fertility were made, but were largely speculative (Hoffman & Hoffman, 1973; Pohlman, 1969). Other authors contended that choice with regard to parenting never existed due to the pervasiveness of pronatalism (Blake, 1972; Peck & Senderowitz, 1974).

In the meantime, the need for serious consideration became apparent as other social scientists began describing findings that revealed that parenthood, and especially motherhood, was not necessarily as glamorous as frequently thought. The various physical, psychological and economic costs of children were identified and often found to affect women most (Bernard, 1974, 1975; Pohlman, 1969; Rossi, 1968). The professional woman, especially, perceived the costs of children as high and modified her behavior accordingly by having fewer children, farther apart, and later in life (Beckman, 1974; Bernard, 1964, 1975; Ginzberg, 1966). Such choices were not surprising in view of the difficulties

experienced by dual-career families (Heckman, Bryson, & Bryson, 1977; Holmstrom, 1972; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1971).

More recently, the previously accepted contentions about childbearing and childrearing held by non-parents have been reexamined. Changes in attitudes toward population growth, family size or childfreeness, and even the "career woman" have been noted (Helson, 1972; Pohlman, 1973, 1974; Suter & Waite, 1975). While sex role preferences, too, have been found to be changing for both sexes, it is most evident for females (Gonder, 1977; Scanzoni, 1975, 1976a, 1976b; Stokes & Willits, 1974). Because of the apparent importance of sex roles, attempts were made to identify a relationship among sex roles, careers and family life (Fogarty, Rapoport, & Rapoport, 1971; Haskell, 1971; Heinsohn, 1974; McLaughlin, 1974). Most notable were Scanzoni's findings that expected family size was related more strongly to sex roles than to any other previously identified variables (Scanzoni, 1975, 1976a, 1976b).

The Study of a Dilemma

The situation facing young adults today, then, is made complex by the realities of parenthood and the social expectations for its implementation. Women still appear to be choosing between children and career achievement. The alternatives of husband participation and/or the greater use of quality child care has not been demonstrated to be feasible.

It is not uncommon for family-life educators or counselors to be confronted by young adults who face a decision-making dilemma as they consider a family lifestyle that includes both careers and children (Fisher, 1977; Tangri, 1972; Whelan, 1975; Yockey, 1975).

The purpose of this study was to alleviate that dilemma by investigating the expected family lifestyle of young adult men and women. To determine the nature of that lifestyle, the relationships among sex role preferences, expectations for female labor force participation, intended family size and attitudes toward the provision of child care were identified. Consensus was noted where it existed and potential concerns discussed.

Descriptions of the kinds of family lifestyles intended by young adults were acquired by using a Data Sheet which combined questions regarding demographic and personal characteristics with the items comprising the sex role scale developed by John Scanzoni at Indiana University (1975). Approximately 715 randomly selected college freshmen from three California institutions, a community college, a state college, and a private university, were surveyed. A detailed description of the population, sample and methodology is available (Fisher, 1978).

Family Lifestyles Planned by Young Adults

Family Size

Most college freshmen intend to have two natural born children, although the mean for women was larger than that for men, 2.09 versus 1.83, $F(1, 448) = 4.51$, $p < .03$. Seventeen percent indicated a desire to adopt children while 8% planned to have a single child. A childfree lifestyle was preferred by 10% of the young adults.

The intended family size of young adults did not vary based on the individual's ethnic group, religious background, size of family in which raised, parents' education and occupation, career goal to which she/he aspired or preferred method of providing daily care to children under the age of six years. In addition, there were no differences in the intentions of the students attending widely varied kinds of colleges. A step-wise multiple regression indicated that the variables which did account for the most variance in intended family size were the sex of the respondent and the respondent's score on the sex role inventory. Further analysis revealed that those persons earning less traditional sex role scores planned smaller families, 1.8 versus 2.07, $t(448) = 1.97$, $p < .05$.

The size of family intended by young adults also varied according to whether or not they expected themselves (if they were female) or their wives (if they were male) to work

outside the home at different times in their lives, $F(4, 425) = 11.43$, $p < .0001$. Those persons who intended for women to work only before children's birth, or before children's birth and after they were in school, planned to have larger families than those persons who expected women to work continuously during adulthood. Such a finding is not surprising and would appear to illustrate the potential impact of the demands of caring for young children.

Males and Females See Different Futures

As indicated previously, males' and females' expectations about the sizes of their families differed slightly. That difference, however, is not as outstanding, and not nearly as provocative, as the differences in the lifestyles which males and females are predicting. For example, young men and women differed on the scores earned on the sex role inventory which consisted primarily of items related to appropriate home and work behavior for married men and women. Men were more likely to earn the scores which were defined as favoring more traditional, and less equalitarian, behavior, $F(1, 448) = 38.80$, $p < .001$.

Working mothers. Young men and women also differed from one another in their expectations for women to participate in the labor force. Even though there was a consensus that women would be working at some time (only .5% of the females and 6% of the males said women would "never work"), there

was disagreement as to the extent of that working. The two most popular responses to the work expectation question were that a woman would work before children's births and as soon as they are in school or that she would work continuously during adulthood. Those responses, however, were chosen by 85% of the women and only 61% of the men. In general, more women are intending to work more often than men are intending for their wives to work.

Child care. Since those persons who expected women to work continuously also expected the smaller families, it was thought that preferences for providing child care might also be related to the total lifestyle. While child care preferences were not found to be related to intended family size, male and female differences were once again identified. Men were more likely to prefer that their children be cared for by a non-working mother. Women were more likely to prefer that their children be cared for equally by the mother and father with some supplementary child care services provided, Chi-Square(4) = 17.63, $p < .001$. These findings were consistent with another which revealed that those persons earning the most traditional sex role scores were more likely to prefer that child care be provided by a non-working mother. On the other hand, those persons who scored less traditionally tended to prefer that their children be cared for either by the mother and father equally or by the mother and father

with some child care services, $F(4, 350) = 19.74$, $p < .0001$.

Implications of Young Adults' Intentions

The results of this investigation confirmed that the future families of many young adults are most likely to contain two children regardless of the parents' background. At the same time, these new families are more likely than past ones to contain adopted children (if the opportunity is available), to have an only child, or even to remain child-free. Substantiation was also found for the contention that increasing numbers of women will enter the labor force, although more women still expect to work than men expect for them to work. In addition, those families in which women expect to work continuously plan to have the least number of children. Young adults also expect that their children will be cared for either by a non-working mother or by the mother and father together.

The significance of sex roles for the future family was apparent throughout this study as in others (Heckman, Bryson, & Bryson, 1977; Parelius, 1975; Scanzoni, 1975, 1976a, 1976b). Sex role was related to intended size of family, to expectations for women to work and to preferred methods of child care. Increased equalitarian attitudes, especially with respect to working women and shared parental duties, were noted and are certain to affect the nature of the young family. The fact that men still earned the most traditional

sex role scores is an indication that while there appears to be substantial consensus as to some aspects of the future families of these young adults, there is also the potential for conflict and, thus, concern.

Concerns

A dilemma appears to face many young adults as they consider career and family lifestyle decisions (Darley, 1976; Fisher, 1977; Whelan, 1975). In fact, some have contended that the "Motherhood Mandate" is sufficient to keep females from even having a choice on the question (Blake, 1972; Russo, 1976). Others have concluded that women still perceive careers and childbearing as incompatible and so they compromise (Haskell, 1977; Scanzoni, 1976a).

The results of this study suggest that women may have responded to the "Motherhood Mandate" in that women, as a total group, intended more children than did men. This was true in spite of the fact that women earned the least traditional sex role scores, were more likely to expect to work, and were less likely to prefer a non-working mother to care for her children. Even though those women who intended to work continuously expected slightly smaller families, women appeared not to be compromising. They expected to work, to have children, and not to use child care to any great extent. Therefore, for this group the dilemma may be the implementa-

on of the "equal-sharing" child care responsibilities

which they planned.

The significance of this new role for men cannot be overestimated. Much of the expected family lifestyle centers on the changing roles of both men and women. Unfortunately, the success of the preferred child care option, "equal-sharing," may be dependent upon outside variables over which even the willing couple has little control. More importantly, the potential for conflict and disharmony was readily apparent in that males and females (as total groups) did not agree on a number of key issues. In addition to differing on intended family size, men and women earned different sex role scores, expected women to work with varying degrees of commitment and preferred distinct modes of caring for young children. Of course, there were considerable numbers of men and women who did agree on these issues, but the critical impact of careful mate selection is obvious.

Application of the Findings

As family-life educators and counselors consider the results of this study, the application of the findings is enhanced by noting some characteristics of the young adults involved. As indicated previously, the students were randomly selected in equal numbers from three different kinds of California colleges. There were wide differences in the backgrounds of students who attended the community college, the state college and the expensive private university. In

addition, the first semester students at the community college represent more than half of the high school graduates from surrounding counties. Thus, the selected students actually represented a very broad section of 18-year-olds in general. The fact that the students' birth intentions did not differ according to socio-economic status, but did concur with other national findings, lends further validity to these results.

Whether or not young adults actually make decisions regarding fertility and employment before marriage also has been the focus of some controversy, with recent studies suggesting that they do (Friedman, 1975; Waite & Stolzenberg, 1976). The degree of significance attained in many of these young adults' descriptions of their future family lifestyles seemed to support the contention that decisions related to careers, work participation, family size, and sex roles are at least anticipated, if not made, before marriage. There can be no question but that the decisions which were the focus of this study will have a profound impact on young adults' lives. Even if those preferences should change somewhat in the future, their behavior at this point in time will be largely influenced by those expectations.

Within this context, the importance of the family-life educator or counselor is underscored. These professionals need to provide young adults with findings regarding the

realities of both marriage and parenthood. They need to help them to explore the advantages, disadvantages and feasibilities of various child care alternatives. They may help to dispel myths about the only-child syndrome and the childfree lifestyle so that all the options are given consideration. Finally, the family-life educator needs to enhance young adults' awareness of the potential conflict between the sexes with regard to their expectations for future family lifestyles. For at least some time in the future, the dilemma surrounding these issues is likely to continue, if not increase, as both sex roles and career opportunities for women continue to change. Young men and women will need the information, clarification and support of concerned, informed professionals as they consider some of the most critical decisions of their lives.

References

Beckman, L. Relative costs and benefits of work and children to professional and non-professional women. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans, August, 1974.

Bernard, J. Academic women. University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964.

Bernard J. The future of motherhood. New York: The Dial Press, 1974.

Bernard, J. Women, wives, mothers: Values and options. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1975.

Blake, J. Coercive pronatalism and American population policy. In R. Parke & C. Westoff (Eds.), Research reports VI, aspects of population growth policy. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.

Bumpass, L., & Westoff, C. The later years of childbearing. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Darley, S. Big-time careers for the little woman: A dual-role dilemma. Journal of Social Issues, 1976, 32, 85-98.

Fawcett, J. Psychology and population. North Haven, Conn.: The Van Dyck Printing Co., 1970.

Fawcett, J. Psychological perspectives on population. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Fisher, P. To parent or not: Implications for the educated couple. Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 1976, 43, 28-32.

Fisher, P. Sex roles, career aspirations, child care expectations, and birth intentions of selected college freshmen (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Pacific, 1977). Dissertation Abstracts, 1978, 39, No. 3, 1337-1338.

Fogarty, M., Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. N. Sex, career and family. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971.

Friedman, J. On ideology and achievement: Determinants of careers orientation among American women. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society, Louisville, Kentucky, 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 123 537)

Ginzberg, E. Life styles of educated women. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Gonder, P. A woman's place. Denver: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1977.

Haskell, S. Desired family-size correlates for single undergraduates. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1977, 2, 5-15.

Heckman, N., Bryson, R., & Bryson, J. Problems of professional couples: A content analysis. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1976, 39, 323-330.

Heinsohn, A. Work/career expectations of female college seniors having traditional and non-traditional sex role equality attitudes (Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1974). Dissertation Abstracts Inter-

national, 1975, 36, 1845. (University Microfilms No. 75-19,913)

Helson, R. The changing image of the career woman. Journal of Social Issues, 1972, 28, 33-46.

Hoffman, L., & Hoffman, M. The value of children to parents. In J. Fawcett (Ed.), Psychological perspectives on population. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Holmstrom, L. The two-career family. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1972.

McLaughlin, S. Expected family size and perceived status deprivation among high school women. Demography, 1974, 11, 57-74.

Parelius, A. Emerging sex-role attitudes, expectations, and strains among college women. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1975, 37, 146-153.

Peck, E., & Senderowitz, J. Pronatalism: The myth of mom and apple pie. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1974.

Pohlman, E. Psychology of birth planning. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1969.

Pohlman, E. Population: A clash of prophets. New York: New American Library, 1973.

Pohlman, E. Changes in views toward childlessness. In E. Peck & J. Senderowitz (Eds.), Pronatalism: The myth of mom and apple pie. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1974.

Rainwater, L. Family design: Marital sexuality, family size and contraception. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965.

Rapoport, R., & Rapoport, R. N. Dual-career families. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1971.

Rossi, A. Transition to parenthood. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1968, 30, 26-39.

Russo, N. The motherhood mandate. Journal of Social Issues, 1976, 32, 143-153.

Ryder, N., & Westoff, C. Reproduction in the United States. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Scanzoni, J. Sex roles, life styles and childbearing. New York: The Free Press, 1975.

Scanzoni, J. Gender roles and the process of fertility control. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1976, 38, 677-691. (a)

Scanzoni, J. Sex role changes and influences on birth intentions. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1976, 38, 43-58. (b)

Stokes, C., & Willits, F. A preliminary analysis of factors related to sex-role ideology among rural origin females. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Montreal, Canada, 1974.

Suter, L., & Waite, L. Worker, housewife, mother: Role decisions of young women. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San

Francisco, 1975. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 122 185)

Tangri, S. Determinants of occupational role innovation among college women. Journal of Social Issues, 1972, 28, 177-199.

Waite, L., & Stolzenberg, R. Intended childbearing and labor force participation of young women: Insights from nonrecursive models. American Sociological Review, 1976, 41, 235-252.

Whelan, E. A baby? . . . maybe. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1975.

Yockey, J. A model of contemporary feminine role change and family size. Sex Roles, 1975, 1, 69-81.